

CITY OF DELTA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

PROGRESS REPORT # 2

POPULATION PROJECTIONS

During the past century, the population of the City of Delta has more than tripled from 2,388 in 1910, according to the US Census, to 7,659 in 2005, as estimated by the Colorado Office of Demography (COD). From 1940 to 1990, the town's growth was fairly stagnant, with a 1940 population of 3,717 and a 1990 population of 3,789. By contrast, the population increased to 6,400 in 2000, an average annual growth rate of 6.9 percent during the decade. Some of this growth was due to annexations. Annexations continued after 2000, with large areas of North Delta and areas west along US 50 added to the city. These annexations plus a recent building boom have increased the city's population by 1,259 in 2005 over the 2000 population, an average annual growth rate of about 3.9 percent.

With pre-existing population within recently annexed areas, the "natural" growth rate of the city may be somewhat distorted by the addition of new territory. Building permits issued by the city since 1999 are another indicator of the city's growth rate. Table 1 shows the total estimated housing units, according to COD, and the number of residential units added, according to city building records, from 1999 through 2006. Table 1 also shows the percentage increase over existing housing units represented by the building permits issued each year. As indicated in Table 1, the city's housing stock increased from 2,598 units 3,403 from 1999 to 2006, an increase of 805 units. During this same period, building permits for 467 residential units were issued. The former number is higher because it includes pre-existing units in annexed territory.

TABLE 1
RESIDENTIAL BUILDING PERMITS AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL RESIDENTIAL
UNITS, 1999 – 2006

Year	Total Housing Units	# Residential Building Permits	% Increase
1999	2,598	75	2.9%
2000	2,749	53	1.9%
2001	3,162	28	0.9%
2002	3,235	26	0.8%
2003	3,259	38	1.2%
2004	3,278	53	1.6%
2005	3,324	79	2.4%
2006	3,403	115	3.4%
Increase from 1999 to 2006	805		
Residential building permits 1999 to 2006		467	

The City of Delta, as the hub of Delta County, is also influenced by the growth of the county. Since 1910, the county's population (which includes the City of Delta) has increased gradually from 13,688 to an estimated 30,255 in 2005, an average annual growth rate of about 1.3 percent. A growth spurt occurred between 1970 and 1980 during the shale oil boom when the county's population increased from 15,286 to 21,225, an average annual growth rate of about 3.9 percent. With a slight loss of population between 1980 and 1990, another growth spurt occurred between 1990 and 2000 when the county's population increased from 20,980 to 27,834, an average annual growth rate of about 3.3 percent. From 2000 to 2005, the county's population increased to 30,257 at a more modest average annual growth rate of about 1.7 percent.

This Comprehensive Plan update also addresses the area surrounding Delta, including the areas within the city's water, sewer and electrical service areas and a three mile radius, which is referred to as the three mile plan area. In Colorado, statutory authority for developing three mile plans is found in C.R.S. 31-12-105(c), excerpts of which are as follows:

No annexation may take place which would have the effect of extending a municipality more than three miles in any direction from any point of such municipal boundary in one year..... Prior to completion of any annexation within the three mile area, the municipality shall have in place a plan for that area, which generally describes the proposed location, character, and extent of streets, bridges, waterways, waterfronts, parkways, playgrounds, squares, parks, aviation fields, other public right-of-ways, grounds, open spaces, public utilities, and terminals.

The three mile plan area includes large tracts of public land, primarily managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and large parcels of agricultural land, most of which is irrigated.

Future population growth in the extra-territorial area, particularly if the city continues an aggressive annexation policy, will impact the regional economy and city services. Growth of the city's hinterland will also affect the amount of land needed for commercial land uses, most of which will continue to be located within the city or newly annexed areas.

Figures 1 and 2 present alternative population projections for the City of Delta and Delta County, respectively. Given the uncertainty of future local, regional, national, and international events and conditions, it is preferable to present future population growth as a range rather than as a single number. Figures 1 and 2 show projected population growth from 2010 to 2030 under low, moderate and high growth scenarios. Figures 1 and 2 also indicate historic growth for the city and county from 1960 to 2005.

The three population growth scenarios are based on alternative average annual growth rates, which are derived from historical growth trends as well as projections developed by COD for Delta County. The rationale for the each alternative growth rate is described below.

- ◆ **Low growth (1 % average annual growth rate)** – From 1940 to 1990, the population of the City of Delta was virtually stagnant, with very minor fluctuations over 10 year US Census counts, increasing from 3,717 in 1940 to only 3,789 in 1990. During this same period, the population of Delta County increased from 16,470 to 20,980, an average annual increase over 50 years of only about 0.5 percent. As indicated in Table 1, the percentage of residential building permits to total housing units was less than or slightly more than one percent during 2001, 2002 and 2003. Thus, it is possible based on past trends, that the City of Delta and Delta County could experience slow growth, particularly if the regional and national economies experience a sustained recession.
- ◆ **Moderate growth (3.6% average annual growth rate)** – The moderate growth rate is based on COD projections for Delta County, which are based on a projected increase in the county's

population from 30,255 in 2005 to 57,491 in 2030, an average annual increase of 3.6 percent over the 25 year period, with some fluctuations over five year intervals. These percentage increases are applied to the city's population for consistency with COD county projections. Similar annual average growth rates occurred for the city between 2000 and 2005 (3.9 percent average annual increase) and for the county between 1990 and 2000 (3.3 percent average annual increase). Thus, it is possible, based on past trends and COD projections, that the City of Delta and Delta County could experience moderate growth during the next 20 years.

- ◆ **High growth (5% average annual growth rate)** – A period of high growth has occurred in the past, according to the US Census. Average annual growth rate for the City of Delta was 6.9 percent from 1990 to 2000. Although such a growth rate has not been sustained for more than ten years, it is possible, with the combination of Delta's high quality of life, its proximity to Grand Junction and Montrose and the impending retirement of Baby Boomers, that Delta could experience high growth during the next 20 years.

Based on past trends, it is probable that growth rates will fluctuate during the next 20 years. However, periods of low growth could be sustained if the state and national economies stagnate, resulting in fewer newcomers. A sharp increase in energy costs could cause retiring Baby Boomers to seek warmer locations. Conversely, periods of high growth could be sustained with healthy state and national economies, a renewed shale oil boom, and continued preservation and enhancement of Delta's quality of life. With the hindsight of past growth trends and confidence that COD's projections for Delta County are reasonable, it appears likely that growth between now and 2030 will be in the moderate range.

Applying the alternative average annual growth rates to the City of Delta indicate a 2030 population ranging from a low of about 9,600 to a high of approximately 17,200 with a moderate rate totaling 14,550 (see Figure 1). Figure 2 indicates a projected range of 37,800 to 68,000 in 2030 with a moderate rate totaling 57,500 for Delta County.

FIGURE 1
CITY OF DELTA POPULATION, HISTORIC AND PROJECTED, 1960-2030

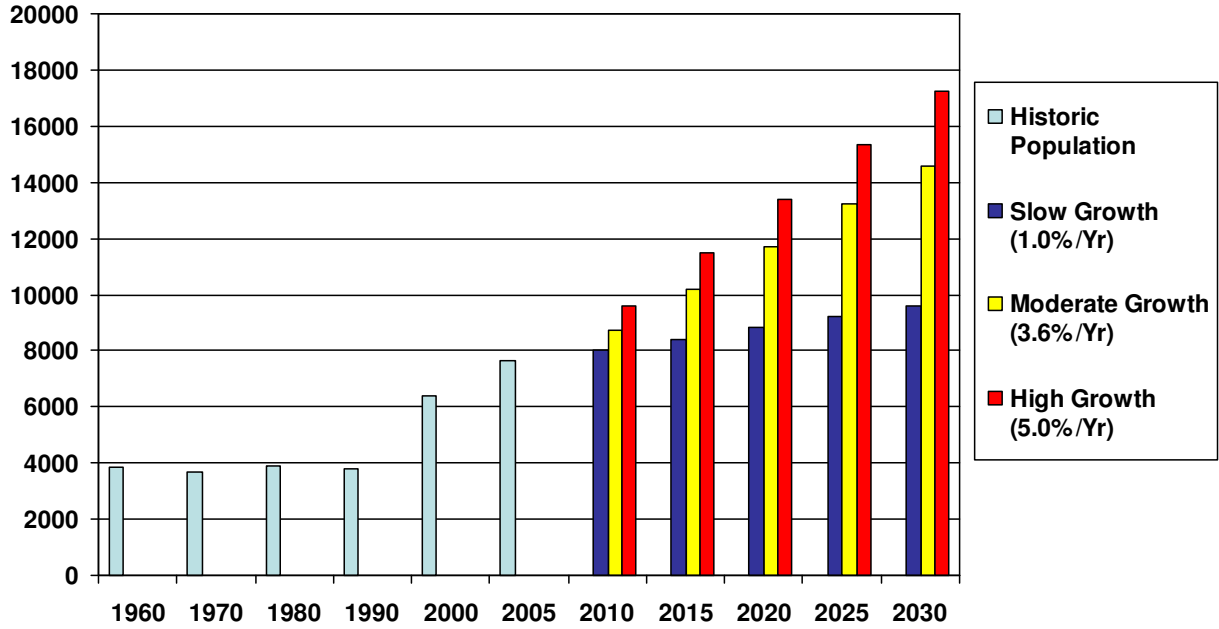


FIGURE 2
DELTA COUNTY POPULATION, HISTORIC AND PROJECTED, 1960-2030

